

Farm Labor

"EQUAL RIGHTS FOR

AGRICULTURAL WORKERS"

Published by Citizens for Farm Labor, P.O. Box 1173, Berkeley, California
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Entire contents labor donated

FLASH: The next monthly meeting of Citizens for Farm Workers will be held on Friday, September 7, at 8:00 p.m. Our speaker will be Dolores Huerta, Vice-President of the National Farm Workers Organizing Committee, AFL-CIO. Her topic will be "The DiGiorgio Election -- What Next?" This will be one of the first appearances by an official of the NFWOC after the August 30 election, and will be one of CFL's most interesting and important meetings. As we go to press, a meeting place has not been definitely confirmed. Watch for announcements in the newspapers, on Co-Op bulletin boards, etc. Or call TH 8-6907 for information.

REPORT TO THE SUBSCRIBER

The disabilities of which we spoke in the last issue are still with us. That is, we are still trying to complete a book on the history of the farm labor movement in California; it does not leave very much time for writing the contents of a magazine, typing the stencils, mimeographing 500 copies of 26-30 pages each, collating them, stapling them, addressing them, stamping them, and the three or four other steps involved in getting Farm Labor into your hands.

So, like the last issue, this issue is comprised of pre-existing material which we believe is of enduring importance.

We include, first, a reprint through the courtesy of The Catholic Voice, weekly newspaper of the Oakland diocese. In order for you to unfold this reprint, it will be necessary for you to remove the staples, but we think it will be worth your trouble.

The statement by the Catholic Rural Life Conference of California offers no comfort to those within the farm labor movement who may prefer to regard agricultural employers as monsters incarnadine. But we, who have never taken this view, regard the statement as a very useful contribution, and we commend the church authorities who prepared it.

To the extent that the farm labor movement is based on illusions, it is weakened, and the Catholic Rural Life Conference statement is a corrective to certain fairly widespread illusions. For example, the assumption that all of California agriculture is corporate in character, and the assumption that all of it is rolling in wealth and easily able to raise wages without internal adjustments. The statement is also, inferentially, a corrective to the sublimely naive notion that the family farm will somehow be saved by ritualistic exposes of corporation farms. The truth is, of course, that the salvation of small, independent farmers requires the same thing as the salvation of agricultural laborers: some very hard work by some very dedicated and competent organizers for a very long time. Frankly, we do not see such organizers of farmers in the field in California, or on the horizon. We must therefore conclude that unless something quite unexpected happens in the near future, small producers of fruits and vegetables are going to go the way of dodo, through their own lack of adaptability.

* * * * *

Secondly, we include another installment from the publication which we began serializing in the last issue: To Build A Union. Let us briefly recapitulate the circumstances under which this material was originally written.

In December, 1960, the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee ventured some 500 miles south of its headquarters in Stockton, for a strike of lettuce cutters in the Imperial Valley, called initially by the United Packinghouse Workers of America. In the words of the AWO director of that time, this step was taken because "there was nothing to do around Stockton."

The Imperial Valley was the most unlikely spot in the United States for a strike, since virtually all the farm work was being done by braceros and "border crossers." And any spot is an unlikely spot for a strike when no advance preparation has been made. The strike was broken. In the process, there was some scuffling; some AWO representatives were arrested; the cases dragged on and on; legal expenses were enormous, and there was nothing to show for it.

As a direct result of this fiasco, George Meany cut off all AFL-CIO support to AWOC in June, 1961. Meany's action was not the unrelieved catastrophe that some uncritical AWOC supporters thought it to be. With professional "organizers" no longer giving the orders, it became possible to do some things which the professionals had not permitted: for example, to establish something in the nature of union locals (we called them Councils), with local leaders; to hold meetings at which members discussed policy and made decisions, rather than listening to speeches; to issue a newsletter by which the various Area Councils kept in touch with one another; to use volunteer organizers, whose prior experience may have been in the civil rights movement or something else other than the labor movement; to convene a statewide farm labor conference, at which the rank-and-file had an opportunity to review past successes and failures and to chart future directions; and, above all, to work with the stable "home guard" families rather than with the ephemera of the farm labor force.

The author had the privilege of serving as chairman of the Stockton Area Council during this phase of AWOC's career. To Build A Union was written, among other reasons, to explain what the Area Councils were doing and why, and, indirectly at least, to point up the differences between these organizing methods and those which had been used by the professionals.

As we said in introducing the first installment, some of the statements in To Build A Union are a bit out-of-date. But the essential argument seems as relevant as ever. Indeed, more relevant than ever. Five years ago, the Area Councils were only a tiny experiment that hardly anybody knew or cared about. It was largely theoretical at that time to talk of business unionism in agriculture versus a unionism of human development. But, today, it is not theoretical at all. At about the time this issue of Farm Labor reaches you, a direct confrontation between these two philosophies of farm labor unionism will take place. There is to be an election among employees of the DiGiorgio Corporation on August 30th, pitting the Teamsters against the National Farm Workers Association (recently merged with what remains of AWOC). Although competition for this distinction is keen, we think it fair to say that the Teamsters Union is the country's purest example of non-ideological unionism, which views as irrelevant such niceties as people being involved in the decisions that affect their lives. NFWA, we think it fair to say, is perhaps the country's purest example -- and, indeed, one of its only examples -- of a union which considers internal democracy a very raison d'être of the organization. This ideal may have become slightly diluted in the exigencies of the past year, but it is still, we think, NFWA's soul, and its secret weapon in the contest with the Teamsters.

The "inside dope" has it that NFWA is the underdog. We believe, however, that NFWA will win, because we believe that democracy is not only a good idea in theory, but that it works. We think that a majority of the employees of the DiGiorgio Corporation, even under election rules which put NFWA at something of a disadvantage, will choose to be represented by an organization which knows them as whole human beings. We think most people, from any walk of life, would make this choice if they ever had the chance.

It would be overly dramatic to say the whole future of the farm labor movement will be sealed on August 30. But there is no doubt the vote will profoundly affect the direction the movement will take: whether the farm labor union in the offing is to be just another "vending machine", as described in Part I of To Build A Union; or whether it will be something more, and will represent the kind of alternative, not only to other unions, but to all our social institutions, which a truly meaningful life requires.

TO BUILD A UNION

(continuation)

by Henry P. Anderson

V. Who Shall be Organized?

A. Introduction

Among those who are sympathetic toward farm labor, but essentially uninitiated in its complexities, misconceptions abound. Some think that the farm labor problem in California is synonymous with "the Mexican problem"... Some think that the farm labor problem is synonymous with "the migrant problem". Others have other fixed ideas about farm laborers and the farm labor problem. Underlying all these misconceptions is the assumption that a farm worker is a farm worker. He is a Mexican. Or he is an Okie. Or he is a migrant. Or he is a hired hand. Or he is something else.

No one is going to be able to build a farm workers' union on the basis of impressions so far from the truth. The truth is that there are farm workers and farm workers -- and farm workers. We have already mentioned some of the types in an earlier section. Some of the categories are man-made and artificial and need not concern us here. But some of the categories differ widely one from another with regard to their aspirations, their status, their grievances, obstacles, and almost everything else.

The first question is: can these disparate types be organized simultaneously? Under two conditions, this question might conceivably be answered "yes". It could be done if the "organizing" by-passed the workers themselves, and through some form of irresistible pressure forced entire sections of the agricultural industry to sign contracts almost overnight. In such a manner, the Teamsters might well be able to blanket in all the workers in the tomato industry, for example, or all the workers in the peach industry. Such major commodity groups are subject to enormous pressure from the Teamsters in two ways: they are dependent on trucks to haul most of their production over-the-road; they are dependent on canneries to process most of their production. Teamsters have both over-the-road drivers and cannery workers under contract already.

Given the conception of a union discussed at the outset of this paper, however, such an approach to "organizing" is unacceptable, even assuming it could be carried out without the intervention of injunctions, emergency legislation, etc.

The only other way it might be possible to organize all of the agricultural workers at once is to conduct what would amount to a number of parallel organizing drives at one time. This seems out of the question in view of the inability of the AFL - CIO's "most serious campaign in history" to gain adequate support even for one type of drive, and in a limited geographic area at that.

It appears that organizing across-the-board must be ruled out as either undesirable or unfeasible. The question then becomes, "Is there some logical sequence in which the several types of farm workers might be organized?" At this point, let us review briefly the types of workers who make up the hired farm labor force in a typical industrialized farming area such as San Joaquin County, or Fresno County, California. For our present purposes, the principal categories are as follows:

1. Foreign contract workers. Almost all Mexican Nationals. A few hundred Japanese Nationals, and Basques.
2. Year-around "hired hands". Usually live on the ranch or close to it. Maintenance men, equipment operators, dairy and livestock workers, etc.
3. Interstate migrants. Some Anglos from as far away as the Midwest; but mostly of Mexican ancestry, from Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. As of the last two years, may be sub-divided between permanent residents of the United States and "green card" immigrants from Mexico who leave their families in the old country and return there periodically.
4. Intrastate migrants. Mainly fruit workers. Many Anglos who winter in the southern end of the San Joaquin Valley; many Mexican-Americans who winter in Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Imperial Counties, etc.
5. Casual. Mostly Anglos; almost all unattached males. Obtain jobs through shape-ups in cities such as Sacramento, Oakland, Stockton, Fresno, etc. Work only on a day-to-day basis.
6. "The home guard." These workers live in the same area the year around, but are differentiated from hired hands, in that they work for a number of different growers each year, and in their characteristic living arrangements. Members of the "home guard" usually live in rural slums, or urban fringe slums, rather than in grower-maintained housing.

In the following table¹ may be seen the numerical distribution of these types of workers in the total farm labor force of California for the year 1960. (Since breakdown between casuals and home guard was not available, these have been combined into a category, "local seasonal". As we may deduce from subsequent tables, however, almost all of these are, in fact, the home guard.)

Table 1

MAN-WEEKS OF HIRED FARM LABOR, BY TYPE OF WORKER,
NUMBER AND PERCENT, CALIFORNIA, 1960

Type of worker	Man-weeks	
	Number	Percent
TOTAL	14,848,840	100.0
Year-around	6,097,714	41.1
Seasonal domestic, total	6,553,714	44.1
Local seasonal	4,979,101	33.5
Intrastate migrants	1,085,750	7.3
Interstate migrants	488,863	3.2
Foreign contract	2,197,606	14.8

1. This and the following series of tables was compiled from unpublished data from the California Department of Employment, Division of Research and Statistics.

Statewide data, however, are somewhat misleading, since they cover up very wide differences in the composition of the farm labor force from county to county. In the following two tables, for example, may be found the make-up of the total hired farm labor force in two of the leading agricultural counties in the nation: California and Fresno and San Joaquin. It will be noted how heavily San Joaquin County growers use foreign contract labor, and how relatively slightly Fresno County growers use this type of labor.

It will be noted, too, that here we have a breakdown of the "local seasonal" force into "home guard" and "casual". The casual workers in these cases are those who obtain their employment through shape-ups operated in Fresno and Stockton, respectively. These data actually overstate the importance of casuals in the farm labor forces of the two counties. We know, for example, that many of the casuals who obtain jobs in the Stockton shape-up are transported to Contra Costa, Stanislaus, or other counties to work. Since this detail is not available, however, we had to include them all in the San Joaquin County figures. We also had to assume that the average day or work week for all types of farmworkers contains the same number of hours. Although data on this point have never been collected, it is almost certain that casuals frequently work shorter days and shorter weeks than do stabler types of workers.

Table 2

MAN-WEEKS OF HIRED FARM LABOR, BY TYPE OF WORKER,
NUMBER AND PERCENT, FRESNO COUNTY, 1960

Type of Worker	Man-weeks	
	Number	Percent
TOTAL	2,162,610	100.0
Year-around	936,140	43.3
Seasonal domestic, total	1,206,130	55.8
Home guard	995,035	46.0
Casual	15,565	0.7
Intrastate migrants	139,130	6.4
Interstate migrants	56,400	2.6
Foreign contract	20,340	0.9

Table 3

MAN-WEEKS OF HIRED FARM LABOR, BY TYPE OF WORKER,
NUMBER AND PERCENT, SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY, 1960

Type of Worker	Man-weeks	
	Number	Percent
TOTAL	998,840	100.0
Year-around	265,140	26.5
Seasonal domestic, total	570,351	57.1
Home guard	320,777	32.1
Casual	30,483	3.1
Intrastate migrants	177,291	17.7
Interstate migrants	41,800	4.2
Foreign contract	163,349	16.4

Finally, let us examine comparable data from Tulare and Kern Counties, two more ^{of the} leading agricultural counties in the nation. It will be noted that the patterns here are different from those of either Fresno or San Joaquin Counties, with ^{even} heavier reliance on local seasonal workers.

Table 4

MAN-WEEKS OF HIRED FARM LABOR, BY TYPE OF WORKER,
NUMBER AND PERCENT, TULARE COUNTY, 1960

Type of Worker	Man-weeks	
	Number	Percent
TOTAL	945,840	100.0
Year-around	348,290	36.8
Seasonal domestic, total	593,080	62.7
Local seasonal	505,860	53.5
Intrastate migrants	53,430	5.6
Interstate migrants	33,790	3.6
Foreign contract	4,470	0.5

Table 5

MAN-WEEKS OF HIRED FARM LABOR, BY TYPE OF WORKER,
NUMBER AND PERCENT, KERN COUNTY, 1960

Type of worker	Man-weeks	
	Number	Percent
TOTAL	921,820	100.0
Year-around	393,400	42.7
Seasonal domestic, total	522,880	56.7
Local seasonal	424,530	46.1
Intrastate migrants	52,330	5.7
Interstate migrants	46,020	4.9
Foreign contract	5,540	0.6

From these data, it is apparent that the question, "Who shall be organized" must be answered, in part, by the conditional reply, "It depends upon what area you're talking about." This is one of the reasons it is difficult to mount a farm labor organizing drive which functions simultaneously in such counties as those above, and in Southern California, where the use of braceros is much greater, and in Northern California, where employment patterns are different still.

None of this is intended to suggest that it is necessary, desirable, or possible for any farm labor organizing drive to concentrate solely upon any particular type of farm workers, or that any type should be ignored. It is a question of emphasis forced upon us by financial and other realities. Where might the major emphasis be placed to best advantage, particularly in the early phases of the drive? Some of the leading arguments may be summarized as follows.

B. Foreign Contract Workers.

If their contracts were taken seriously by anyone concerned, braceros might, paradoxically enough, prove the most organizable of any element in the farm labor force. Braceros are the only class of farm workers in America who have a guarantee of the right of electing representatives. Article 21 of the Migrant Labor Agreement between Mexico and the United States contains such a guarantee, and, what is more, this article has been interpreted by the two governments to include the right to representation by "any legitimate and bona fide labor organization." The international treaty goes on to say "the employer must recognize such representatives as spokesmen for the workers." Unfortunately, this section of the treaty is ignored or subverted by employers and government enforcement agencies even more cynically than most of the other paper guarantees to which braceros are theoretically entitled. In practice, we have to say that the bracero program is administered in : : such a way as to make these workers unorganizable.

In San Joaquin County within the past month, for example, braceros who have said they wanted the AWOC to represent them, and have even signed authorizations to this effect, have been threatened with immediate repatriation to Mexico -- and these threats have been upheld by both the Mexican consul and the local "compliance officer" of the U.S. Department of Labor.

If the program were administered in any other way, it would undoubtedly be abolished by bracero-users themselves, and some program with built-in unorganizability would be erected in its place. The Japanese National program, for example, is always available on a standby basis.

C. Hired Hands.

The principal argument in favor of concentrating upon these farm workers is that they occupy particularly crucial positions within the industry. There would be no dairy, livestock, or poultry industries at all without permanent workers. There would be no crops for seasonal harvest hands to pick if there were no year-around workers to keep the machinery in working order, prepare the land, plant the seeds, fertilize, spray, irrigate, and the like. The principal argument against concentrating upon permanent employees, at least at the outset, is that they identify much more closely with management than any other class of farm workers. They enjoy the fruits of paternalism. Most have risen from seasonal or migrant to year-around status, and are wholly dependent upon the whims of the employer for continued enjoyment of their present status. Few are likely to sacrifice their imagined blessings by union participation -- at least, in the union's early stages.

D. Interstate Migrants.

"Okies" and other Anglo migrants are often highly knowledgeable and militant union material. The disadvantage of trying to build a union around them is that they rarely remain in any one crop-area more than a month. Texas-Mexicans and "green-card" workers pose this same problem of geographical instability, plus a host of others as well: unfamiliarity with unionism; unfamiliarity with the English language; the cultural heritage of the patrón system; etc. Another characteristic of many interstate migrants which poses a problem to organizing is that most of them come from states where agricultural

wages are much lower than they are in California. To a Texas migrant, who is accustomed to getting 50¢ an hour at home, \$1.00 an hour, or even 70¢ an hour, seems munificent. It ^{may be} difficult for him to understand why people earning such munificent wages should want to ask for \$1.25 an hour.

E. Intrastate Migrants.

Many of these workers travel the same circuit year after year, have come to know one another, and form a viable basis for "traveling locals" which return to the same home base for a significant portion of each season. One of the arguments against a pre-occupation with this group is that it tends to be somewhat exclusive and aristocratic -- limiting itself to ladder work and looking down, literally and figuratively, on other types of agricultural employment. Another argument against such a preoccupation is that this group is probably not numerically large enough to be decisive to the industry even if it were wholly organized. Thirdly, there is the same structural problem one faces with any type of migrants: can a "traveling local" service and sustain itself without permanent locals in each of the various areas into which the travelers move?

F. Transients and casuals.

Skid row shape-ups represent the closest parallel to a hiring hall or a "funnel" which exists anywhere in agriculture at the present time. It is possible to reach more casuals in a shorter period of time with handbills, etc., than is possible among other types of farm workers. Some observers also feel that the extreme mobility of the skid row transient farm worker is an asset rather than a liability to organization. They argue that the transient acts as a "grapevine", and quickly passes the word up and down the state as to the union's activities and purposes. The arguments against an emphasis on skid row shape-ups, however, are formidable. Most of these workers are more or less severely damaged psychologically, are running away from something, and have lost most of the self-confidence they may once have had. Most cannot be relied upon to pass along accurate messages, to show up for work from one day to the next, to do anything else. This is not to say they should be written off the human ledger. But it is to say a union faced with almost insurmountable problems of other types can hardly survive if it tries to serve as a psychiatric ward, alcoholism clinic, and vocational rehabilitation agency. Skid row transients should receive therapy and should be rehabilitated, to be sure. But not by the industry of agriculture, nor by a farm labor union. The job is one for the society which damaged these men in the first place.

Another argument which must be raised against a preoccupation with transient single males is that their contacts "along the line" are almost entirely limited to other transient single males. They have little contact with family migrants, and even less with the home guard. "The word" does not really spread through this means, but goes around and around in the same circle -- a very limited circle.

(1-3%) Which suggests a final argument against a skid row focus. Even if these were the most stable and responsible of workers, the simple fact is that they make up so small a fraction of the total farm labor force the industry could, with relatively little adjustment, get along without them entirely. (See Tables 2 and 3.) It is no secret that many growers and farm labor contractors maintain their "day haul" (i.e., shape-up)

activities only because the California Department of Employment requires them to do so as a precondition to receiving foreign contract workers.

A pick-up truck sent to Stockton's skid row at 4:00 in the morning satisfies the requirement of Public Law 78 that "no (Mexican) workers... shall be available...unless...reasonable efforts have been made to attract domestic workers for such employment..."

G. The Home Guard.

It is difficult to reach the home guard, both in logistic terms, and in more human terms. Although they live in what are often called "shoestring communities" and "neighborhoods", these tend to be mere agglomerations of essentially isolated families, rather than "communities" in a sociological sense. Initial contacts, then, would almost have to be made on an individual basis rather than in groups. At the same time, impressive arguments may be made in favor of an emphasis upon the home guard in the first phases of building a farm labor union. In each of the counties examined in Tables 2-5, the home guard comprises the largest single element in the farm labor force.

Secondly, the home guard increases in numerical importance as time goes by. For more than twenty years, the tendency has been for migrants to decrease in number, to put down roots in Hooverilles and barrios and to swell the ranks of the home guard.

Thirdly, with the possible exception of year-around hired hands, the home guard is the most essential element within the farm labor force. Members of the home guard do most of the pruning, thinning, cultivating, irrigating, and other skilled and semi-skilled pre-harvest activities. The agricultural industry could conceivably survive withdrawal of year-around workers, by replacing them with members of the home guard. But if the home guard withdrew, there would be no one to replace them.

Fourthly, and most importantly, the home guard is stable and responsible. Most are family people. They are taxpayers. Most own their homes, modest and even pathetic as those homes may seem to the middle-class. Their children go to school regularly. Members of the home guard satisfy all residency requirements for social and political participation. All that is lacking is to make opportunities for such participation -- including participation in the union-building process -- come to life in terms comprehensible to people who have not had such opportunities before.

It is here suggested that primary emphasis should be placed on building solidly among the home guard. Upon this stable foundation, other storeys in the farm labor mansion could be and should be erected. Intrastate migrants, certainly; next, perhaps, interstate migrants; eventually, when it became evident the union was permanent, and could offer protection against employer reprisals, year-around workers would be added to complete the structure.

VI. Where Shall Organizing Be Done?

A. States and Regions

In answering the question, "where?", like the question, "who?", we must first conjure with the ever-present ^{likelihood} of limitations of resources. There is no useful purpose to be served by dreaming about a farm labor organizing campaign waged in all 50 states of the union, or even in an appreciable number of them simultaneously. It is necessary to pick a region where organizing seems to make good sense, and when a firm foothold has been established there, to move out into other regions.

It makes good sense to choose an area in which agriculture is highly industrialized -- i.e., in which most farm work is done by hired laborers rather than self-employed farmers and unpaid family workers. It also makes good sense to choose an area in which the obstacles to organizing mentioned in the first section of this paper are less formidable than they are in other areas. Unhappily, the places in which agriculture is most industrialized tend to be the places in which all the obstacles mentioned are most formidable. Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas are conspicuous examples. Perhaps the closest thing to a "favorable climate" for union-building in agriculture is to be found on the Pacific Coast. Not that it is favorable. But it is less unfavorable than in other regions of intensive agriculture. There is little demoralization from the bracero program in Oregon and Washington. To a large extent through the efforts of AWOC, the use of braceros is being cut back in California. As a consequence, wages are slowly rising. History seems to show that such improvements, rather than slaking the appetite for further improvements, stimulate it.

B. Natural areas

Even within a state, it will probably prove necessary to limit the scope of organizing drives, at least for a time. California is nearly nine hundred miles long. The task is to select a natural agricultural area which comes as close as possible to being self-contained: that is, which has a minimum of out-of-area competition; a minimum of in-flow and out-flow of labor; etc. Some portions of California come fairly close to this ideal. For example, there is year-around agricultural activity in the citrus belt of Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernadino, and Riverside Counties. There is activity all year long in the fabulously rich and highly diversified San Joaquin Valley. This valley, though, is itself 250 miles long, and over 50 miles wide in many places. Natural sub-areas within this natural area could be chosen if one wished.

For example, in the southern end of the valley cotton can be grown -- and is, in huge amounts. Cotton cannot be grown successfully in the northern end of the valley. The selection of an initial area of operations might be made along some such ecological lines as these.

C. Crop monopolies

One of the arguments which agricultural employers use to most telling effect with legislators and the general public is that they can't meet the competition from other areas if they are singled out for unionization. It was on the strength of this argument, for example, that Governor Edmund G. (Pat) Brown of California publicly withdrew his support of farm labor legislation in January, 1961.

The argument would obviously be worthless if unionization were started in a crop-area which had a monopoly or near-monopoly on the country's production of a given commodity. There are several such crop-areas in California. The San Joaquin Delta, for example, has an effective monopoly on the production of asparagus. A small strip of coastline a little below San Francisco has an effective monopoly on the nation's production of Brussels sprouts. Three or four central California counties have an effective monopoly on the production of apricots. Three counties produce almost all the artichokes in the United States. One county (Imperial) produces three-fourths of all the country's winter lettuce. One county (Riverside) produces all the dates in the country. A number of other similar monopoly situations exist within the state of California.

Planners of a farm labor organizing drive should consider the possibility of starting with one or two of these monopoly crop-areas.

D. Supply lines

Whenever a farm labor campaign begins, requests come in from other areas, saying, in so many words, "Conditions are much worse here than where you are. When are you coming over to help us? Please hurry." It is extremely difficult to steel oneself against such appeals. But steel oneself one must. The appeals must not, of course, be ignored. And they must not be brushed aside insensitively. Each should receive, if possible, a personal visit from someone who can explain fully, clearly, and patiently the drive's larger strategy, and the need to establish a limited beachhead before moving into other areas. The dangers of "over-extended supply lines" should be carefully explained. In most cases, it should be possible to avert disappointment and disillusionment. Following proper explanation, most farm workers can appreciate that by trying to do too much, too quickly, with too few tools, nothing will get done at all. Most farm workers can understand that patience, a little while longer, is sometimes in their own best interests.

E. In-the-area organizing

There remains one level at which the question "where?" must still be examined. Assume that the planners of a farm labor campaign have selected a region, a sub-region, or a crop-area in which to begin. Where, within that area, do they make contact with the people to be organized? Do they try to reach them at their places of employment? In some ways, on-the-job contacts are preferable to any other kind. But the National Labor-Management Relations Act, which protects the right of union representatives to enter places of employment and talk to workers in every other industry, does not apply to agriculture. In this industry, union representatives can be, and have been arrested for setting foot inside the boundaries of a field

or orchard. This is true even during lunch periods, when the representatives could by no stretch of the imagination be charged with slowing down production. Agricultural employers evidently regard their employees as personal property, like their land, their machinery, their buildings, and their trees. The concept of trespass has been extended to include "intrusion" upon employees, and growers have been able to enlist sheriff's departments in enforcing this extension of the concept. Until this concept is successfully challenged in the courts, or until the Taft-Hartley Act is amended to remove its agricultural exclusion, the answer to the question, "where?", resolves into one or another form of "off-the-job."

Union rallies and mass meetings? Such attempts on the part of Mahomet to make the mountain come to him are likely to prove as futile in the future as they have been in the past. Most agricultural workers are not going to drag themselves from a ten- or twelve-hour day in the fields to a union rally when they have no conception of what a union is or what it can mean in their lives. By the time they have this understanding, there will be no need for pep rallies.

Places of entertainment? There are no places where farm workers foregather in the manner that members of a printing trade local, for example, might ^{gather} in a certain bowling alley, tavern, or coffee shop.

Places of recruitment? We have already discussed the skid row shape-ups and their shortcomings.

What is there left? Places of residence. The elastic laws of trespassing make it difficult to reach many farm laborers even where they live. Year-around workers often live on the ranch. A union representative could be prevented from talking with them, and probably would be. Even some of the "home guard" ^{at times} may move from their homes in town to camps on the employers' property. This is true of Filipinos, for example, who are crucially important in such crop-activities as the asparagus harvest in San Joaquin County and the Brussels sprout harvest in Santa Cruz County. A union representative who attempted to talk to a group of Filipinos in one of their camps would, at the present time, be subject to arrest.

The doctrine that farm workers are the property of their employers when occupying company housing has been applied most widely and persistently to braceros. It is not unusual for bracero camps to be surrounded by high fences, topped by barbed wire, so that the effect is more like that of a prison than a domicile. Union representatives, and, for that matter, university students and other interested persons, have frequently been refused entry to bracero camps, and threatened with arrest for trespassing if they tried. As these lines are being written, this doctrine is finally undergoing a legal test in San Joaquin County. Two members of AWOC attempted to distribute leaflets in a particularly notorious bracero camp, were beaten and then arrested, and are willing to go to jail if necessary for the sake of this application of freedom of speech, press, and assembly. The American Civil Liberties Union will handle the appeals. (Footnote on next page.)

There remains one major segment of the farm labor force which can be reached at any time, without legal test cases, since they do not live at the place of employment but in homes which are either rented or owner-occupied. These are the farm workers who live in "sheestring communities." In this respect, they are more accessible than any other major segment of the farm labor force. And this answer to the question, "where?", constitutes another reason why it might be well for any future organizing drive to begin with an emphasis on the home guard.

VIII. When Shall Organizing Be Done?

We have already, implicitly, answered the question of "when?" in terms of time of day: after work. This does not necessarily mean the evening hours, however, since farm laborers often have working hours quite different from those of urban workers. It is commonplace to start work as early as one can distinguish the colors of the produce, and to stop before the heaviest heat of the day. Thus, a characteristic working day in Stanislaus or Sutter County peaches might run from 5:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.: nine full hours. Allowing workers two hours to return to their domiciles, get cleaned up, and get something to eat, home visits by union representatives could properly start by 4:00 in the afternoon. Under these circumstances, the visits should stop by, say, 8:00 p.m.

The question "when?" can also mean "what time of year?" There are two schools of thought on this question. One holds that the only time of year you can profitably talk to farm workers about unionism is in the midst of the season, when, presumably, all their grievances and bitternesses are fresh in their minds. The other school of thought holds that this argument is invalid on two counts: (1) workers are often too tired and harried in the middle of the season to be willing to take the time required to talk seriously about unionism; (2) the kind of union to be desired does not flow from grievances and bitternesses, but from more affirmative feelings which can only be developed in slow and patient discussions.

The "out of season" school of thought maintains that the slack seasons, when some farm labor organizers complain "there is nothing to do," are precisely the times when there is the most to do. In San Joaquin County, for example, there are two "dead periods." The home guard calls one "Little Winter." It lasts a month or six weeks, centering in July. "Big Winter" runs from November to February. These are the times when the home guard is really at home, with nothing to do but look for an occasional odd job. Home visits during these periods might well be conducted twelve hours a day.

1 Despite a wealth of judicial precedent that labor organizers, evangelists, etc., are protected by the 1st Amendment in their access to "company towns", a superior court in Manteca found the two AWOC volunteers guilty. The conviction was upheld by an appellate court in Stockton. The U.S. Supreme Court declined to review the case. Since the Manteca judge's opinion has never been overriden or superceded, right down to the present day agricultural workers who happen to live in camps may receive visitors only sufferance of the owner -- a limitation on freedom of speech which has no counterpart elsewhere in our society. This subject has received far less attention from civil libertarians than it merits. (H.P.A. 8/15/66.)

VIII. Who Shall do the Organizing?

A. Field Representatives.

In some quarters within the farm labor movement, it is said that "You can make a farm worker into an organizer but you can't make an organizer into a farm worker." As an aphorism this is attractive, but as doctrine it is highly dubious.

Take the first half of the epigram. It may be true that many persons of reasonable intelligence, imagination, and articulateness can, through sufficient training and experience, become competent organizers. Trouble arises, however, as one loses sight of the need for extended training and experience and subconsciously replaced hard work with the epigram itself. The unspoken assumption gradually spreads that almost any farm worker is able to organize other farm workers, simply by virtue of the fact he "speaks the same language." And so, totally unprepared workers are given the title of "organizer" and thrown into the farm labor pool to start organizing. They sink more often than they swim, and those who learn to swim at all waste a great deal of time and make a great many unnecessary mistakes in the process.

The second half of the above epigram is even more dubious doctrine. In view of the history of the labor movement, it is difficult to understand how the proposition could ever have arisen that workers in an industry can only be organized by their fellow workers from the same industry. The Automobile Workers Organizing Committee was staffed by mine workers, railroad workers, brewery workers, construction workers. Steel workers, it was sometimes said, were organized by everybody but steel workers.

The proposition that "you can't make an organizer into a farm Worker" implies that farm workers are somehow different, psychologically, from ordinary people, and that the general rules of human organization do not apply. This is an ugly proposition, and must be rejected. Farm workers are not peculiar. They are just people. The only significant respect in which they may be "different" is that they have not had as much experience with organizations, as such, as most people in our highly organized society. All that this means is that a competent organizer will begin at a more basic level in his approach and will not assume sophistication where there is innocence.

The foregoing epigram must also be rejected on strictly pragmatic grounds. Some "outside" organizers are shunned by the farm workers they are supposed to be organizing; other "outsiders" are warmly accepted. Some farm-workers-turned-organizer are shunned by their former compatriots; others are warmly accepted. The credentials which matter in farm labor are those that matter in any organizing field: not so much one's background in the industry, but very much the kind of person one is. Farm workers, like people generally, tend to respect someone who demonstrates, by his deeds, that he is honorable, compassionate, brave, insightful, straightforward, and selfless. Farm workers, like anyone else, tend to resent someone who demonstrates, by his deeds, that he is unscrupulous, callous, cowardly, fatuous, devious, and selfish.

Organizers for the farm labor movement, therefore, should come from wherever people with the essential personal qualities may be found. Some, certainly, can be found among farm workers themselves. Some, it is to be hoped, can be found within the remainder of the labor movement.

B. Who Shall Lead?

Some may say that we should wait until farm workers produce their own "natural leaders", and by so doing demonstrate that they "really want to be organized", before assistance is offered from other sources. There is reason to fear that if we wait for this ideal state, we will wait forever. It is not that potential leaders are lacking in the farm labor force. Although many have been removed from the farm labor force by the winnowing process described earlier, a wealth of human potential remains. But conditions keep such people from realizing their potential spontaneously. The abolitionists of a little over a century ago did not suggest that slavery should continue until slaves themselves rose up and struck off their own shackles. It is curious to hear an equivalent position advanced seriously today.

What is needed is someone to alter conditions in such a way that the natural leadership of the farm labor force is liberated. This someone must be keenly sensitive to the danger of his overstaying his visit. He must be as nearly without personal ambition as one can be and still be human.

It is pertinent to consider here the distinction between hortatory and administrative leaders. Some leaders have "charisma". They are gifted public speakers. They can move an audience to tears, to laughter, to anger, to love, to hope. The problem in farm labor, however, is that there are no audiences. The problem is to overcome the fragmentation and alienation which keeps farm workers from forming audiences -- or groups of any kind. This is not a problem which exhortation can solve. It is here suggested, therefore, that the welkin-ringing type of leadership, however appropriate it may be in other settings, is not appropriate to the farm labor movement, at least at this point. A more contemplative type of leadership is needed, which can analyze a complex situation coolly, which can anticipate and plan for the future, which can administer those plans calmly and efficiently, which can delegate responsibility. This type of leader cannot afford to be an iceberg, to be sure. He must be able to inspire confidence. But there are other ways -- and better ways -- to inspire genuine, lasting confidence than through oratory.

We shall see what some of them are in subsequent chapters.

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